
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 12-02

**The Maycroft Apartments
1474 Columbia Road, NW
(Square 2669, Lot 825)**

Meeting Date: December 15, 2011
Applicant: Jubilee Housing, Inc.
Affected ANC: 1A
Staff Reviewer: Tim Dennee

After careful consideration, the HPO recommends that the Board designate the Maycroft Apartments at 1474 Columbia Road, NW a landmark to be entered in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places with a positive recommendation for listing as of local significance, with a period of significance dating to the time of the building's completion. The property meets D.C. designation Criterion D for "architecture and urbanism" as representative of an important type of Washington apartment building and one that has played an important role in the development and character of Columbia Heights. It is thus eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural character as an important apartment type. Specifically, it is eligible under the multiple-property document "Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C., 1880-1945" under the property subtype "conventional, low-rise apartment building."

The Maycroft was constructed in 1922-1923 by owner Isadore Freund, to a design by the prolific apartment architects Stern & Tomlinson. Before this time, Freund had been almost exclusively a developer of rowhouses. Still considered a speculative and uncertain gamble in 1900, the large, purpose-built apartment building had become a ubiquitous alternative to single-family dwellings by the 1920s, abetted by the far-reaching streetcar system and motor transport. Apartment buildings proliferated in Columbia Heights, for example, in a third wave of development following, and filling in around, the initial low-density, detached residential pattern, and then the first strings of rowhouses.

The Maycroft was characteristic of contemporary apartments worked into existing inner suburbs: of only medium height, entered by a single, main door, and generally configured in U, H or I plans providing light courts and some surrounding green margin. It was also typical in its architecture, indicative of a conservatism that favored the classical and colonial revival. Such buildings under five stories' height have thus been classified in the multiple-property document as the "conventional, low-rise apartment building."

The four-story, red-brick building has a modified, U-shaped plan fitted to the irregular-quadrilateral lot. The building is derived mostly from the Italian Renaissance villa, with its horizontal emphasis, attic story, keystone flat arches, and a pressed metal cornice featuring relief arches to suggest late-Gothic corbels. Only the entry porch's roof replacement balustrade

and posts are suggestive of American colonial and neoclassical architecture. In all, the Maycroft is a very competent and typical apartment of the time, both handsome and cost-conscious, it would have appealed to and been affordable to tenants who were transient or unable to purchase their own homes.

The building retains high integrity inside and out and is notable for its lovely, original lobby with its heavy, classical, plaster moldings, and paneled walls over a marble wainscot and floor. The building's corridors have period octagonal-tiled floors.

The multiple-property document for apartment buildings was prepared in order to preserve a variety of the unusual and the typical of this class of buildings that has been so important to the historical, economic, social and architectural development of Washington. It was done with the understanding that not all apartments would be designated, but that significant examples, particularly in neighborhoods not otherwise protected by the preservation law, could be protected and also even repaired, by making them eligible for rehabilitation tax credits, as is the intention for the Maycroft.